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(71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): **TANOX, INC.** [US/US]; 10301 Stella Link, Houston, TX 77025 (US).

(72) Inventors; and

(75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only): **ZOU, Linglong** [CN/US]; 2706 Sunfish Drive, Pearland, TX 77584 (US). **LIU, Meng-Yuan** [CN/US]; 3234 Braesview Drive, Pearland, TX 77584 (US).

(74) Agent: **GUFFEY, Wendell, Ray**; Tanox, Inc., 10301 Stella Link, Houston, TX 77025 (US).

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(54) Title: **HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS ENTRY INHIBITOR ASSAY**

(57) Abstract: The present invention is a method for evaluating the ability of a compound to prevent the Human Immunodeficiency Virus ("HIV") from entering into a T cell. The method involves fusing a first cell line that mimics HIV viral particles by expressing a gp120-gp41 complex on the cell surface and that contains a Tat protein in the cytoplasm with a second cell line that mimics T cells by expressing CD4 and its co-receptors on the cell surface and that contains a Tat-inducible reporter gene expression cassette in the nucleus. The cell lines are fused alone or in the presence of a potential HIV entry inhibitor and the amount of  $\beta$ -galactosidase produced by the fused cells is determined. Compounds that reduce the amount of  $\beta$ -galactosidase produced by the fused cells have interfered with the interaction of the gp120-gp41 complex and CD4 and its co-receptors and are therefore deemed be HIV entry inhibitors.

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